

THE ETCHED WORK  
OF  
REMBRANDT

CRITICALLY RECONSIDERED.

BY  
FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN, F.R.C.S.

1877.

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Cover  
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LONDON:  
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AND  
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—  
1877.



*The following Monograph makes no pretence to the infallibility of a Treatise.*

*An attempt, on the occasion of a temporary Exhibition of Rembrandt's Etchings at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, to give practical shape to suggestions made ten years ago—the utmost that can be claimed for it is that it may serve as a point of departure for more deliberate work in other and more competent hands.*

*Meanwhile, it is hoped that it has been so written that no one but its Author can, properly, be held responsible for the subversive theory which it seeks to establish.*

1st May, 1877.




ABBREVIATIONS.

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" Brit. Mus."	-	-	-	-	British Museum.
" D."	-	-	-	-	Daulby's Catalogue.
" W."	-	-	-	-	Wilson's Catalogue.





HE action of the Club in bringing together the present collection\* has been mainly utilitarian: its aim—in furtherance of a special object to be presently described—not so much to gratify the eye as to assist the judgment, and, in the case of the advanced Rembrandt Student, to stimulate the critical faculty.

That object may be thus briefly explained. On the occasion of a former Exhibition of the Etchings of Rembrandt, in the Old Club House in 1867, it was suggested to the Committee that the arrangement according to *Subject*, then universally adopted, was fatal to the comprehensive study of such works, and that it might with advantage be discarded for the more rational order of *date of production*; that an arbitrary method, by which works of the latest were mixed up with works of the earliest period, confused

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\* A Collection of the Etchings of Rembrandt, arranged chronologically, in the Gallery of the Burlington Fine Arts Club, May 1st, 1877.



the sense, perverted the judgment, and rendered critical examination and comparison impossible; and, generally, that such a system, though it might satisfy the Cataloguer, was unworthy of the Biographer and useless to the Student. The Art work of a lifetime, it was contended, should not be looked at as a series of hap-hazard disjointed efforts, but as the continuous expression of a prolonged chain of logical sequences depending for their coherence on the due maintenance of the order of their production, and only to be properly understood when studied in that order; and finally it was hinted—and that with tolerable confidence—that if this unintelligent and incoherent classification were reversed, and a more consecutive method of arrangement substituted for it, new matter yet unsuspected in regard to the Etched Work of Rembrandt might be brought to light, and grave errors of attribution as to some of his larger published plates be both proved and rectified.

To these representations—novel and revolutionary as they no doubt felt them to be—the Committee were good enough to listen, and hence it came to be conceded not only that there should be a second Exhibition of the Etched Works of Rembrandt in the rooms of the Club, but that that exhibition, in accordance with one of the fundamental objects for which the Club was established, should be made subservient to a directly



useful purpose. Discarding therefore, the methods of the Cataloguers from Gersaint downwards, we have now, for the first time, what may be called the Natural History of Rembrandt before our eyes, and may read, *pari passu* with the events of his Life, the motives of that Art of which those events were but the proximate cause. Admitted thus to the intimacy at once of the Artist and of the Man, we may here see him dealing with those magic fragments of copper to be measured only by inches on which his earliest essays were made; and, following him through the changes of style and execution of his middle period, may still attend him till his power, constantly augmenting, culminates in the impressive conceptions of his latest day—"Christ before Pilate" and the great "Crucifixion." We may perhaps be pardoned, if—brought suddenly into the presence of a great story thus graphically told, and while even yet in the full enjoyment and fruition of a grateful dream thus at length realised—a somewhat less grateful thought should carry us on to that inevitable time when, in common with all sublunary things, this wealth of treasure must come to be dispersed, and when our "Hundred Guilders in the First State," our "Rembrandts with the Sabre," our "Tholinx's," our "Buenos with the Black Ring," our "Old Haaring's," and our "Turned-up Hats and Embroidered Mantles"—with their inestimable dates and *griffonments*, and which by a generous courtesy we are now



permitted to enjoy as our own—will pass into hands that know us not.

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Orlers, a Magistrate and Burgomaster of Leyden, having access to the municipal archives, and writing at a time when Rembrandt was alive to contradict him, tells us plainly that he was born on the 15th of July, 1606, and that, "become one of the most renowned painters of the century," he had removed to Amsterdam, where "in this year of 1641 he still lives;" while Rembrandt himself, in a precious note on his own portrait, contributed by Mr. Holford tells us no less plainly that in 1631, when that portrait was executed, he was twenty-four years of age—"Rembrandt, f. 1631, *Æ. 24*,"—the note clearly showing that the portrait in question was made in the early part of the year—*i.e.*, before the 15th of July—and that the supposition that he was born in 1607 or 1608 is gratuitous.

Nor, since it is an object of this paper to deal with error in whatever form it may present itself in connexion with Rembrandt, is there any better ground for the fable that he was born of needy parents and in his father's mill, seeing that his parents lived at the time of his birth in a well-to-do house in the Weddesteeg of Leyden, and that when the family property came to be divided some years



later on the death of his mother it consisted, besides "the house with land adjoining it" on the Weddesteeg, of "a house and land " on the Rhine, a house and land on the old Rampart, two other " houses (smaller) on the Rhine, two houses behind the three last, " and of a pleasure garden on the principal dyke of the town—besides " a-half share in the mill near the Whitte-Poert " (valued alone at 3,064 fl.,) and of " effects in gold and jewellery, and letters of rent."

Rembrandt, then, was of Burgher, not pauper origin, and his entry into the world was consistent with that status, since we find him in 1630 taking a good house on the Breedstraat of Amsterdam, and shortly afterwards aspiring to, and effecting, an alliance with the considerable family of Rombartus van Ulenburg, Jurisconsult, Councillor and Burgomaster of Leëuwarden, a member of the Court of Friseland, and more than once a political envoy from that Court.\* Of this marriage with Saskia van Ulenburg, if time and space permitted, we should have much to say, since it furnished the proud and happy husband with many a motive for his art during the eight years of sunshine that succeeded it. Saskia, however, died in 1642, leaving to Rembrandt the usufruct of her

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\* NOTE.—It is this Rombartus who reports to his fellow magistrates how, on an occasion when he had been treated with marked affability and retained to dinner by William the Taciturn, the Prince, on leaving the table, had been assassinated by "a Bourgoingnon."—VOSMAER, "Rembrandt sa vie et ses œuvres," p. 43. La Haye, 1868.



property for as long as he should continue unmarried, with remainder to a son born of the marriage. From that moment, when the romance of his life may be said to have ended, comparatively little is known of Rembrandt. Whether, in the cloud that then began to gather about him and which finally enveloped him, this boy was a cause, or, whether, as some have not unreasonably supposed, Titus, by the various legal processes in which he figured, was merely an instrument to save for his father the wreck of a declining estate ; whether the cause of that decline was the reaction which often follows great success, or the general impoverishment consequent on the disastrous foreign wars in which Holland was then engaged ; or whether, as Sandrart suggests, Rembrandt would have been a richer man if he had known how to "*ménager les gens qu'il fréquentait*," it is not within the scope of this article to enquire. That of which we are only too certain is that, somewhere about 1654, he did marry again and that, in order to satisfy the claims put forth by the trustees of Titus, who was a minor, he was obliged to make an inventory of the goods which he had enjoyed in common with Saskia ; that he valued those goods at 40,000 fl., and that they realised less than 5,000 fl. ; and that this, with the sum produced by the sale of his house in 1660 for 6,700 fl., being insufficient to satisfy the claim against him, he became a bankrupt—and also, that, for some unexplained reason, his brother Adrian and his sister Elizabeth, both of whom had received a larger share of the patrimonial



estate than he, fell into extreme poverty about the same time. But what it chiefly concerns us to know is that through all the troubles that followed upon the death of Saskia and his subsequent marriage, his constitutional energy and industry never forsook him and that, from that time till his own death, though we hear of him and see him no longer, he was no less than at any period of his career adding to his power, and, both by his painting and etching, accumulating immortality. The following simple entry in the *Livre Mortuaire* of the Wester Kerk, of Amsterdam, is the last word we have of him:—

“Tuesday 8 Oct., 1669, Rembrandt Van Riyn, Painter, on the Roozegracht, opposite the Doolhof. Leaves two children.”

A theory of Rembrandt's latest day, however, has been recently advanced so much more grateful to subscribe to than the received account and which is to some extent confirmed by the relatively considerable sum of 16fl. spent on his funeral, that we transcribe it *tel quel*:—

“Un jour,” says Mons. Vosmaer, “j’allai à la recherche au Rozegracht pour voir encore s’il ne restait plus de trace de la dernière demeure de Rembrandt, qui ne paraissait plus être connue. En face de l’emplacement où s’est trouvé le vieux *Doolhof* au côté nord, je remarquai deux façades de vieux style, portant des écussons, avec la date 1652. Or c’est vers 1656 que Rembrandt s’établit sur ce quai. Au rez-de-chaussée d’une de ces maisons, se trouve l’atelier de M. Stracké, statuaire.



“ Dès que j’entrai et regardais autour de moi, une vive ressemblance me frappa.  
 “ Rembrandt a fait un croquis d’un vestibule, probablement dans sa maison. La vue  
 “ est prise d’une chambre attenante, où au coin gauche se trouve une presse, à droite  
 “ quelques marches d’un escalier. A travers la porte on voit le vestibule, deux  
 “ fenêtres et une porte ouverte, par lesquelles on aperçoit le feuillage d’un arbre, un  
 “ quai et les façades du côté opposé du canal. Voilà bien le même lieu que celui où  
 “ je me trouvais ! M. Stracké eut la bienveillance de me montrer toute la maison,  
 “ dont l’état actuel permet de saisir celui d’autrefois. Le plancher qui séparait les caves  
 “ du premier étage a disparu, mais on voit encore les consoles des poutres. Au  
 “ second étage, deux chambres ; celle qui donne sur le quai avait eu une belle cheminée  
 “ et les murs sont encore garnis de plaques en faïence colorée, recouvertes aujourd’hui  
 “ d’un papier moderne. L’autre appartement, qui a bien pu se prêter comme  
 “ atelier de peintre, a trois fenêtres sur le nord. Le propriétaire a assuré au locataire  
 “ actuel que la maison fut autrefois tellement garnie de marbre que la valeur des  
 “ dépouilles en avait dépassé le prix d’achat de la maison. Même une ruelle,  
 “ conduisant aux parties attenantes de la maison, en était pavée et aujourd’hui encore  
 “ le dallage de la cuisine est en marbre de Carrare ! On voit que la maison, nouvelle-  
 “ ment construite alors, n’avait pas l’apparence d’une pauvre retraite.

“ Voilà donc apparemment la demeure où le vieil artiste a passé ses derniers  
 “ jours et où sont encore écloses tant de chefs-d’oeuvre.”

It is necessary before proceeding further, to say a word on the part played by Etching in the time of which we are writing, and in explanation of that condition of the etched plate which is technically called a “State.”

How comes it, it may first be asked, that the Old Masters made Etching—“Painter’s Etching” as it was called to distinguish it from



Engraver's copy—so essential a part of their practice and that with us moderns it is a comparatively lost art? The answer is obvious. Etching is a direct and personal, as well as a reproductive, art, and, in the days when locomotion was difficult and communication limited, it was at once a means of extending the reputation of the artist and enlarging his market, and of putting into the hands of persons at a distance and of modest fortunes work as original as his painting, at a nominal cost. The engraving of the present day, or even of the day of the great English mezzotinters, (who may be said to have done for Reynolds what Rembrandt did for himself,) supplies the same want in a much less perfect degree, seeing that the engraver's work, however useful in disseminating design, is, as to execution and expression, but speech at second hand, while Etching is utterance *à vive voix*. Etching, therefore, and with reason, entered largely into both the Practice and the Commerce of Art in Rembrandt's day. Simple people like ourselves profited by that commerce; nor have we in these later times any reason to complain of it. How else in a small Society like this could we produce, at a month's notice and exhibit to others at a glance, the whole artistic side of such a life as Rembrandt's—how in our own persons, possess and enjoy, as we are able to do, not one but a dozen of his undoubted works! We venture to think the modern painter much to blame for his indifference to so original, prolific, and passionate an art—an indifference to which we owe the idea that has come to be spread abroad that Etching, the most



difficult of the Arts and the one which most requires the experience of the master, is fitted only for the amusement of the amateur; and which again, has taught the latter to believe that in proportion as he is ignorant and untrained he can practise it successfully. To Philip Gilbert Hamerton\* is due the merit of amending this error and of replacing by philosophical and sound reasoning original Etching on its true æsthetical foundations; and to this Club, no less the credit of proving, by its splendid demonstration of to-day, that it is, *par excellence*, a Painter's Art.

A thing which cannot fail to strike the observer in making the tour of the Gallery of the Club is the constant repetition of the word "State." Two distinct notions, we may explain, attach to that word, the popular notion and the collector's notion. The popular notion is that the finished must be better than the unfinished state of a plate; the collector's that the first, which is usually the unfinished state, is the more desirable of the two; the less critical observer, in short, preferring to be in possession of what he would call the ultimate mind of the artist—the more fastidious collector of the freshness of his first impression. As usual in the settlement of such questions, reason and unreason meet, and both must be made allowance for. Thus, if we consider the spontaneity which distinguishes

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\* "Etching and Etchers," 2d Edit. 8vo. Macmillan, 187 .



Etching from every other art—the impulse, the sensitiveness, and the emphasis which constitute its chief claim to interest and which determine the brilliancy of its suggestions—the collector has the best of it; if a more effective tonality and a corrected drawing be preferred, the less sensitive *acquéreur* has the advantage. Our own sympathies, we need scarcely say, are with the collector, who evinces in this preference a correct appreciation of the intention of Etching. But to proceed. Between the true “first” and true “second” state of an etched plate a distinct interval of time must always be supposed to have elapsed, an interval during which the spirit in which the work was undertaken has had time to cool or at all events undergo a change, and, in the subsequent elaboration which is to constitute the new state, to be even altogether lost. The earlier the state also, as a rule, the better the impression, but not necessarily so, and upon this we desire to lay particular stress. And there is yet another point which, as practical etchers and printers, we would submit to the consideration of the purchaser of etchings, and that is that it is not every addition to a plate which properly constitutes a “State.” Practically, what happens when the Etcher takes his plate to the printers, or proceeds to print it himself, is this—the artist may, if we will, be Rembrandt and the plate the portrait of the Burgomaster Six. An impression, or possibly two only, may have been taken, when it is seen that the height of the window-sill coming too near the shoulder of the Burgomaster affects unfavourably the



freedom and movement of the figure, so—the plate being a “dry point” which will yield but few impressions, and perhaps a precious plate on other accounts—it is taken home at once, the objectionable sill in it is reduced, a false line in the *contour* of the face removed, and the artist’s name and the date are added to the right hand corner. This done, he again goes with it to the printer, and, while at the press side, rectifies first a misplacement of two of the numerals comprising the date, and, probably after another impression or two, thinks it better to add the name and age of Six to the left hand corner of the work. Now, Rembrandt himself would tell us, as we now also venture to submit to the collector, that these four or five exceptional, unsettled impressions anterior to the main *tirage*, were but “trial proofs,” and the printer will go farther and aver that they were not “good” proofs. But three centuries later comes the Biographer and Cataloguer, and with him the dealer, to tell us something quite different—the first with laudable precision to describe three different states of the plate—the last to persuade us that the two first of these “states” are worth three times more money than the perfected plate. We desire to say that there is room for grave misconception here, and that the slight differences we have described in such a plate do not properly constitute so many states expressive of a descending scale of value, real or conventional, but that as “trial impressions” they are not so good as when the plate, in technical



phrase, has "begun to print"—that is to say, when the ink has fairly begun to enter the deeper lines, and the printer has had time to become what is technically called "acquainted with his plate;" and, more than this, that as these desirable conditions do not usually happen till towards the eighth or tenth impression, it follows as a matter of course that the third state of such a plate is likely to be, as to impression, better than the first. In a "bitten" plate, like that of Clement de Jonge (W. 274), the case is different. Here, because the plate is more durable, there may be, and probably there have been, a considerable number of impressions taken of each condition of it. Each one of these conditions may, therefore, with propriety, be called a "State."

A word, also, about dates. The signature and date upon a plate might with reason be supposed to indicate the time of its execution. It does not necessarily do so. Thus, the signature and date of a plate will often not be found upon it till the second or third state, or even, as in the case of the "Christ before Pilate," till the fourth state of the plate. Now, in the case of so formidable a work as this, many weeks, and even months, may elapse between the printing of the first and the printing of this fourth state; and, after all, the date found on that plate may refer, not to the time of its composition and first printing, but to the fourth printing of it. As practical Etchers we can attest this to be frequently the case, and we



shall revert to the subject when we come to speak, as we shall have to do, of the "Crucifixion," a companion and probably posterior plate to this, but which, for all that, bears a date anterior to it.

\* \* \* \*

We have now to address ourselves to a part of our task which appeals to the advanced student rather than to the general reader. Having glanced at so much of the life of Rembrandt as connects itself immediately or remotely with that branch of his art with which only we have undertaken to deal, and seen the part borne by original Etching in the business of the painter of his day, we come to the main purposes of this sketch, which are—Firstly, to inform ourselves of the actual means which Rembrandt took to develop the Art in his own particular case and to make it profitable to him in the way of his profession ; and Secondly, and principally, to inquire whether the whole of the extensive work before us is undoubtedly by his hand, or whether any and what portion of it may with greater probability be attributed to the hands of others—whether this treasure, in short, is without alloy, or whether its ring has been in any degree impaired by admixture with a baser metal. For ourselves, reverting to what has been hinted at at the commencement of this paper, we must state at once our belief that all we have here is *not* by the hand of Rembrandt ;



that for many years past, as our acquaintance with his work has become more intimate, this belief has strengthened ; and that, by the rare opportunity for comparative study which has been afforded us by the present Exhibition, it has assumed all the proportions of a conviction. But how are we to impart this belief to others ? If Rembrandt's hand is not in all we here see, whose is the hand that has displaced it, or been a sharer with his in the work ? This is the question which it is at once the main purpose of this exhibition to raise and the chief attempt of this imperfect page to answer. How solve it ? How account for the fact that these Etchings, the authenticity of many of which we say we doubt, are yet, one and all, signed "*Rembrandt*," and that no name, either of pupil or assistant, appears on any one of them ? The position, it must be confessed, is embarrassing. On the other hand, now that we have them arranged in the order of their date of production, how comes it that one etching, say of 1633, is so unlike, and inferior to, another etching of 1633, that one of them, on the face of it, is the work of the master, the other of the man ? The conflict being between sense and evidence, how bring these into agreement ? Obviously, only by sifting the evidence anew.

And the evidence is this. In 1630, or thereabouts, we have seen Rembrandt, as yet with no practice but with a reputation which, doubtless, had preceded him, taking a house on the Breedstraat of



Amsterdam of unreasonable dimensions for a bachelor of twenty-three, unless some ulterior object attached to the venture. What was that object? Houbraken tells us plainly that it was the formation of a School :—" He divided the whole of the upper part of the house," he says, "into cellules or small studios for the reception of pupils, who, by " this kind of segregation, were to preserve their individuality;" while Sandrart more specifically informs us who and what those pupils were, and what was the work they did there. To this testimony of Sandrart, whose knowledge of Rembrandt was confined to this portion of his career, we invite the particular attention of the reader, because in it we find the first germ of the solution for which we are looking. " His house," says Sandrart, " was constantly full of pupils of good " family who paid him 100 florins annually, without counting the " advantage he derived from their painting *and engraving*, which " amounted to 2,000 or 2,500 florins more." Who, we now ask, were those pupils—can they be shown to have been also etchers? Where are those engravings by which Rembrandt profited so largely, but which the Catalogues make no allowance for?

The first pupil that joined Rembrandt in the Breedstraat was Jan Van Vliet—that went with him there, rather, since he was already with him at Leyden—an etcher. Then Ferdinand Bol—an etcher. Then Jan Lievens—an etcher. Then Goevert Flink; then Jacob Backer, Gerard Dow, and De Wedt, (but which of the



brothers we know not, except that it was the same that painted the "Raising of Lazarus" now at St. Petersburg). Then De Poorter, an etcher; Savry, an etcher; and Victor. Then Philip Koninck, an etcher; then Gerbrandt Van den Eckhout, an etcher; and, probably about the same time, P. CE. Rodermondt and J. Verbeecq, both etchers. There were many more—thirty in fact in his house at a time, and many of them etchers too—but as they did not join Rembrandt till after the time at which, as we shall presently show, he had ceased to avail himself of pupil work in his engraved publications (that is to say till after 1639), we abstain from naming them. Well, what do we know of the etched works of these men? Does it in any way resemble in style and manner what we now see on the walls of our gallery? We answer, with considerable confidence, that it does; that we have there, in one and the same year, the work of Rembrandt, the work of Lievens, and the work of Bol, and the work of all three of them together. Is that really so? Is it susceptible of proof? If it is, then must the arrangement of every Cabinet in Europe be altered—every *Catalogue Raisonné* extant, become obsolete! We are aware of this, and are sensible of the gravity of the position we are creating. We know what our distinguished and courteous friend, Monsieur Charles Blanc, who has committed himself to the old heresy, will say. Still we shrink not. Why should we? We are but proposing to exchange our habit of thinking in one direction—or possibly of taking things for granted without thinking at all—



for the use of our eyes, and asking the same sacrifice of others. We do but suggest that they shall examine closely, critically, and anew, as we have done, the various public collections of the signed Etchings of Rembrandt's Scholars, and then—while the eye is full of what they have seen—that they shall carry their corrected knowledge with them into our Club gallery and compare it with what they find there. The following references—we apologise for the necessity of making them—will facilitate the enquiry :—

*Jan Van Vliet*.—The characteristic of Van Vliet, the youngest of Rembrandt's pupils, is blackness, violent opposition of light and shade destructive of all tonality and all repose; coarse, incorrect drawing; vulgarity and exaggeration of expression; absence of quality. How could such a man be tolerated, much less employed, by such a master! How permitted, as we see he was (Wilson, 28-29), to make distorted second states of some of Rembrandt's plates, and even to attach to vile copies of others of them his master's name (W. 8, 15, Signed "*R. H. 1631*," 136), and many more, of which, in particular, may be instanced (Brit. Mus.) his copy of "Rembrandt in a turned-up hat and embroidered mantle," with the signature and date of "*R. H., 1631*," in close, and evidently intentional, *fac simile*, but with a mistake in the last numeral of the date of 4 for 1. The work, however, of Van Vliet does not appear in any but the earliest Etchings of Rembrandt, and in the crowd of

"small Heads" which have been recklessly attributed to him by the Cataloguers. After that it was confined to the reproduction of his master's works, and, in its *ensemble*, constitutes the "*cupboard full of prints by Van Vliet, after pictures by Rembrandt*," which figure in the catalogue of the bankruptcy. Van Vliet's work was too bad to be admitted into any of the reproductions we have here.

Ferdinand Bol.—*En revanche*, there was nothing vulgar about Ferdinand Bol, but rather a quiet dignity which brought his work into closer harmony with that of Rembrandt than could be said of the work of any other of his scholars. He was, besides, a close imitator not only of the manner, but of the actual *modus operandi* of Rembrandt—a copier not only of the subject but of the very lines which composed it, so that at times, except for an absence of purpose inherent in the copied line—it is extremely difficult to say of two things at once so similar and so dissimilar—this is by Rembrandt and this by Bol. His weeds and broken foregrounds (Daulby 2), his foliage and middle distances (Brit. Mus. 20 and D. 2), and his treatment of masonry (B. M. 20.) are studied *fac similes* of the same accessories when employed by Rembrandt, and the action and drawing of his hands are invariably good. See also (Brit. Mus. 12, 13) (Daulby 3, 8, 9). His hand, in our opinion, is largely seen in the present Collection.



*Jan Lievens.*—Lievens, since he signed his own works and was of the same age as Rembrandt, must be considered as a *Sectateur* and assistant rather than as a pupil.\* His style is of three distinct kinds—his own, thin and without force (Brit. Mus. D. 1)—that of Rembrandt (Brit. Mus. 45,)—and a late semi-Italian, or “noble” style, as it was called, which he acquired at Antwerp (Brit. Mus. 40, 42). His diagnostic mark is an attempt to express dramatic force by a protrusion of the eye-ball and an exaggerated isolation of the pupil (Brit. Mus. 7), and by a treatment of atmospheric back grounds by curls and vagaries of the needle, intended to be like Rembrandt’s, but really like nothing either in art or in nature (Brit. Mus. 14). He was extensively employed by Rembrandt in the production of his larger etchings, and we shall have much to say of him when we come to speak of those etchings, of which, we hold, there are several in the Gallery. His powers became greatly developed in after life, and, when he left Rembrandt, he did some fine things on his own account, both portraits (D. 55) and woodcuts (W. 318).

*Philip Koninck.*—But the artist nature—the robust organisation—most akin to Rembrandt’s was Philip Koninck’s. His paintings

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\* By the *Acte Constitutif* of the Guild of Painters at the Hague it was forbidden to a pupil during his apprenticeship, under penalty of a fine, to sign his own works.

and etchings, both portrait and landscape, so closely approach those of his great prototype that we may well expect to find evidence of his collaboration with Rembrandt in his engraved publications. We do not find it, however, for the reason, probably, that he did not join Rembrandt till between 1635 and 1640, when, with one or two exceptions he had ceased to avail himself of pupil-work in his etchings. His name, therefore, is introduced here rather to discharge than convict him of any such supposed association.

*Paulus Ægidius Rottermondt* (or Rodermondt), like Van Vliet, was engaged in making etchings with the signature of Rembrandt in *fac simile*, but whether as a disciple or a mere appropriator we have been unable to determine. His etching of "Esau Selling his Birthright" (Brit. Mus.), reminds us of the "Good Samaritan" and there are some cocks and hens in it in the middle distance ludicrously like the conventional birds which figure in that much overestimated print.

*Philip Verbeecq*.—The etchings of Verbeecq are also singularly like the early work of Rembrandt, and of the "Good Samaritan" in particular, but are said to have been done, which, however, we much doubt, before his time.

*Salomon Savry* confined himself to the Etching of "Beggars"



(W. 174, 175), which are freely signed with Rembrandt's name, with the one exception of "The Ratcatcher," the copy of which he avows.

In all these cases the difficulty of ascription is enhanced by three things. Firstly, by the *acte constitutif* of the Guild of Painters at the Hague already mentioned, which forbade pupils during their apprenticeship to sign their own works. Secondly, by the fact that the etchings which these pupils were employed upon are, after all, from Rembrandt's design, and therefore imbued with his manner. Thirdly, by the circumstance that these etchings are rendered all the more *trompeuse* by having received Rembrandt's corrections and by being published with his *imprimatur*.

But stranger still than that Rembrandt should have employed his pupils to carry out his designs is the fact that he himself, and that in a fashion quite undisguised, availed himself on numerous occasions of theirs; thus—Jan Van de Velde is the reputed author of "The Good Samaritan" (W. 95), "The Pancake Woman" (W. 128), and "The Charlatan"\* (W. 132); Beham of the *Gueux*, with the inscriptions "*t'es Vinnich Kout*" and "*dats niet*," which Rembrandt copied and Savry etched (W. 174, 175); Lievens, of the three

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\* Vosmaer, p. 39. See present Essay, page 36.

"Oriental Heads" (W. 288, 289, 290); Jan de Wedt, so it is said, of much of the motive of the great "Raising of Lazarus" (W. 77); Bol of the plate attributed to, but only adopted by, Rembrandt in the "Pampiere Werld"; Eckhout of the "Sacrifice of Abraham" (W. 39), which Rembrandt so improved upon in his Etching as to make it his own; Martin Van Heemskerk of two of the subjects from the Life of Tobit; Leonardo da Vinci of the famous Rembrandt drawing, with slight variations, of "The Last Supper," in the Collection of M. De Vos; Heemskerk again of the "Return of the Prodigal" (W. 96). Hercules Seghers of the Flight into Egypt (W. 61). Gerard Dow of the Woman of Samaria at the Ruins? (W. 74). Herkman's of the subject known as "Adverse Fortune" (W. 115), and others whose names we cannot call to mind of the "Travelling Musicians" (W. 123), the small "Disciples at Emmaus" (W. 93), and the "Onion Woman" (Ch. Blanc 102). To these, also, may be added the great "St. Jerome at the foot of a Tree" (W. 109), which is after a drawing by Titian, and several other etchings, in which Titian's or Campagnola's drawings or prints furnished motives for the backgrounds (W. 208, 64, 112).

But strangest fact of all—several of these pupils came to be, in the estimation of Rembrandt's contemporaries, of greater account than he. If a public work or historical fact, such as the visit of Henrietta Maria to Amsterdam, had to be illustrated, it was Lievens or Bol,



not Rembrandt, who was called upon by the authorities to immortalize it. If a large price had to be paid for a picture, it was Flink who was the Millais of the day. If verses in honour of Painting had to be composed, it was to Koninck, not Rembrandt, that the bays were awarded.

“Roi Philippe.” “Roi (*i.e.* König) par le pinceau et les couleurs.”

It was to no purpose that Rembrandt, then in the Rozengracht, was painting and etching with a splendour hitherto unequalled. A reaction had set in. His *prestige* had departed. It was no longer necessary, as Houbraken once told us, to paint like Rembrandt to command success; what was now necessary was not to paint like him. Six florins was enough for a portrait of his then going begging for a purchaser, while Flink was living in a palace, and Vondel was exalting him and Koninck at Rembrandt's expence,

“C'est Flink dont la Clarte nous sert d'avis.”

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“Painting also has its Sons of Darkness,  
 “Like owls loving the night;  
 “While Koninck follows truth,  
 “And, dealing not in false shadows  
 “Or in phantoms clothed in black,  
 “Paints life and nature as it is—*clear*.”

All of which, doubtless, the “Son of Darkness,” and the “Owl loving the night,” received with unruffled equanimity.

We may now enter the Gallery, and, without losing sight of the special object with which the Collection has been brought together proceed to the examination of its contents. The larger figures above the frames refer to the year in which it is assumed the etchings were produced; the numbers on the frames to the order in which, as nearly as may be, they were executed. The presumed date of production was arrived at in the following manner. The dated etchings of a given year were first hung; then those which are not dated, but which present a similarity of manner with the dated etchings of that year; or which are known to have some necessary association with the events of Rembrandt's life at that time; or which immediately follow on pictures of the same subject painted in that or the previous year; or, if portraits, when they correspond with the known age of the individual at the time. Thus the little etching of the dying Saskia (W. 353), which is an undated work of the style of the middle period, finds its place in 1642, partly because it is like the work of 1642, partly because, on the face of it, it is a portrait of Saskia, and partly because it is known that Saskia died in that year. By the aid of these and other *data* the task of assignment has proved by no means so difficult as had been prophesied, and for all the purposes of a comprehensive study of the Master it may, we think, be taken as sufficiently correct.

This much premised—a single tour of the Gallery, in the direc-



tion, of the arrow of indication, will show us much that this article is meant to demonstrate. Manifest differences of style and treatment marking the dawn, growth, and maturity of Rembrandt's genius, will probably strike us first; then a certain inequality in the work of the first ten years, as if different hands had been employed upon it—coarse publications like the "Ecce Homo," coming in incongruous apposition with refined plates like the "Death of the Virgin," melodramatic efforts like the "Raising of Lazarus," with timid representations like the "Good Samaritan"—and so forth. These once passed, a greater homogeneity of design and handling will become apparent, and then Landscape, will be seen not only to have a place, but to become so unexpectedly predominant as nearly to fill the wall space devoted to the next ten years. Then, at last, this in its turn will give way to portraits, compositions, and biblical subjects of such transcendent power and beauty that we shall need no more to convince us that the apogee of this form of art has been reached.

Our circuit will also have suggested this to us, that, in our more deliberate examination of the prints before us as well as for the convenience of such passing reference as we shall here have to make to them, we shall do well to consider them as belonging, not only to certain years, but, to one or other of three periods, or decenniads; an Early, or first period—from 1628 to 1639; a Middle, or second period—from 1640 to 1650; and a Late, or third period—from 1651 to 1661.

## EARLY PERIOD. 1628 TO 1639.

We have said that a chief object in the present arrangement has been to obtain by it the advantage, never yet enjoyed on such a scale, of comparing one etching with another so as to arrive at a knowledge of what is and what is not by Rembrandt. As it happens, an example of this kind of advantage meets us at the very threshold. Thus, if we compare the subtle portrait of Rembrandt's mother (W 348) and the spirited little etching of Rembrandt himself (W. 16) with an aged head which is a little below it (W. 26) we shall see at once that, of the three things, two only are by the same hand, and, from what we now know of the work of Rembrandt's scholars, that the third is by Bol. Similar or analogous mistakes, it may here be mentioned, have been constantly met with and corrected during the hanging of the Collection, till at length, by a process of expurgation, which, however, has still left us quite questionable prints enough for illustration, the Gallery been in great measure cleared of them.

Portraits of Rembrandt, and his mother and wife, abound in this period, those of himself being commonly in some fancy costume which in the gravity of mature age we notice he does not condescend to. The most important of these is "Rembrandt in a turned-up hat and embroidered mantle" (W. 7), on the first state of which we have



Rembrandt's drawing, with signature, date, and age, in his own handwriting. We shall do well to spend a little time over this interesting and valuable print, partly because of the evidence it gives us of Rembrandt's age, and partly because it is necessary we should know that the chalk additions to it were made not at the time of its execution, 1631, but at some period posterior to that date. The handling, the writing, and the discrepancy between the signature in full and the "*R. H.*," which was his proper signature at that time and which appears on every subsequent state of the plate except the 7th state, leave us in no doubt as to this. Then "Rembrandt with three moustaches,"\* (W. 2), a small head of extreme beauty and vivacity should be noticed; then three others which occur towards the end of the series—"Rembrandt in a cap and feather" (W. 20), "Rembrandt with a drawn sabre" (W. 18), and "Rembrandt leaning on a sill" (W. 21), the latter having on both the first and second states, as in Mr. Holford's print, the artist's drawing in pencil. We do not class the all but unique "Rembrandt with an aigrette" (W. 23), among his portraits, because the face, compared with (W. 2), is clearly not his, and because it has a distinct mole near the nose which Rembrandt had not. Among the portraits of his mother—which, by the way, are by no means of good quality or sufficiently

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\* We repeat these titles to avoid confusion, but it is high time that a new and more simple nomenclature were adopted.

ample as to selection—is, besides the charming head of 1628, one (W. 340) which deserves notice from the fact that it is in widow's weeds for the death of Harmen (his father), and that Rembrandt has availed himself of that event to attach his name to it at full length; up to that time his signature having been, as has been shown\* "*R. H.*" ("Rembrandt Harmenszoon"—Harmen's son). The fine head of his wife, Saskia (W. 337), then a bride, next claims attention; the 1st rare state, in particular, because of its extraordinary brilliancy of execution and of the consummate way in which it is lighted, and also because it is an instance of how much may be lost, even in such hands as Rembrandt's, in the elaboration of an etching, or rather in the act of taking it up to work upon it a second time. To judge by the shadow projected by the head, the etching in its 1st state would seem to have been made opposite an ordinary window, and, from the position of the same shadow in subsequent states, to have been completed in the studio—with how much loss to its luminous quality it is needless to say.

We now come to a series of prints which belong entirely to this period (some of which are here, but the majority of which have been excluded), the authenticity of which we distinctly impugn; that is, we say of them that they are only in part—and that in small part—

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\* Rev. C. H. Middleton. *Academy*, No. 251, p. 169, and Vosmaer, pp. 134-136.



by Rembrandt, and, although after Rembrandt's design, and done in his house, and under his surveillance and correction, that they are executed by his scholars and assistants. These are—besides a number of heads by Van Vliet, signed "*R. H.*," which are not here but which are chronicled as Rembrandt's work in all the catalogues—a little wood-cut of a "Philosopher with an Hour Glass," by Lievens; "A Bust of an Old Man," by Bol; "The Flight into Egypt," *Rembrandt inventor et fecit, 1633*, probably also by Bol, after a design by Lastman; "The Good Samaritan," *Rembrandt inventor et fecit, 1633*, by Bol or Rottermond; "The Raising of Lazarus," *R. H. V. Riyn ft.*; "The Great Descent from the Cross," *Rembrandt fecit cum pryvl. 1633*, by Lievens; "Adverse Fortune," *Rembrandt, f. 1633*, probably by Bol; the "Three Oriental Heads" *Rembrandt geretuckerdt, 1635*, by Lievens "Rembrandt with a Bird of Prey;" by Van Vliet?; the "Ecce Homo," *Rembrandt, f. 1636*, "*cum privile*," by Lievens; "Rembrandt with Frizzled Hair," by Van Vliet? "St. Jerome in Meditation," *Rembrandt, 1634*, by Bol? "The Goldweigher," *Rembrandt, f., 1639*, of which the head and shoulders only are by Rembrandt; and "Rembrandt Drawing from a Model," of which the *ébauche* alone is by his hand, and the rest—as in the case of the Goldweigher—by Bol.

"THE RAISING OF LAZARUS"(W. 77).—There is no date on this print, and the signature is not Rembrandt's, nor is the *ordonnance* of the plate; nor its melodramatic action; nor is it at all like any of Rembrandt's

work previous to 1633, when he was using the signature "*R.H.*," or indeed after it. It looks as if done from a picture, and it is said, though we cannot vouch for this, that there is a picture like it at St. Petersburg, by De Wedt. Whether this is so or not there is little of Rembrandt, either in feeling, composition, or execution, in the plate before us, and what there is has the air of being foreign to it—of having been imported into it. The etching of the robe on the principal figure is very able, but not Rembrandt's? There is work in different parts of the sky like the work of Lievens, and more still in every part of the plate (except the figure of Christ), like that of Bol. The faces in the crowd are Bol's, as well as the rock and earth lines, and the shadowing under the signature. On the other hand there is more force in the work than is usual with Bol, and more, apparently, of the hardihood of Lievens. Altogether, therefore, while we profess a general distrust of the plate, we hesitate to pronounce upon it, nor do we know when it was done. Meanwhile, the Student may compare it for *difference from Rembrandt's work* with the head of Rembrandt (W. 16) done before it, and with the small head of Rembrandt (W. 2) done after it; and for *similarity with Bol's work*, with the School of Rembrandt in the British Museum, and with the heads in the "Good Samaritan" (W. 95).

"THE GOOD SAMARITAN" (W. 95).—Of this work we may speak with less hesitation. We hold that the plate is by Bol—unless, indeed, which we once thought possible, Rembrandt found for the occasion another



Bol in Rottermond. The barrel in the right corner without substance, rotundity, or containing power; the straw above it like hair; the landscape, buildings, and foliage in the middle distance, Rembrandtesque, but not Rembrandt; the toy poultry; the ill-expressed masonry about the window; the boy holding the horse; the old man on the steps; the weeds in the foreground; all have their counterpart in Bol's work in the British Museum. Meantime, Vosmaer, speaking of an anterior etching of the same subject, signed "*I van de Velde fecit*" (to whom in fact, though we cannot agree with him, he attributes its invention) says "La scène me paraît le prototype de celle de Rembrandt, avec son vieil édifice, son perron, où apparaît un valet portant une torche, son escalier, au bas duquel le Samaritain paye l'hôte qui tient une chandelle, et avec son cheval et le serviteur qui en enlève le blessé. Le fond en diffère."\* Compare the heads in this composition, for *difference*, with "Rembrandt's mother" (W. 348) or "Rembrandt with three moustaches" (W. 2), or the portrait of "Saskia" (W. 337).

"THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS" (W. 84).—Of the various copies made for Rembrandt in the year 1633 (the year prolific of copies) this plate is the one at once the most able, and yet the most demonstrably a copy, since the evidence against it is not only such as it bears on its

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\* Vosmaer. "Rembrandt sa vie et ses œuvres," p. 39.

face, but such as is obtainable from without. There are, in fact, two plates of the subject similar in size, but widely different in execution and comparative merit. Of these two plates, the first one failed in the biting, and was abandoned; the one exhibited being a second plate done to replace the first. A close study of the two is needful to the appreciation of the views put forth in this article. The first plate (Brit. Mus. W. 83) is finely and delicately etched, and has all the appearance of being by the hand of Rembrandt. The work in it is masterly, and looks original; that is to say, every line and mark in it has its purpose, and there is a look about the whole as if it had been done *con amore*. An attempt, for the purpose of illustration, has been made to photograph a portion of this first plate, but the ruin made by the acid has been too complete to make the reproduction other than a confused blot. (Plate i.) Carefully looked at, however, and compared with a photograph of a similar portion of the second plate (Plate ii.), its superiority of handling will be at once perceived. In the foreground, for instance, is an embroidered cloth: look at it attentively, and then carry the eye quickly to the same cloth in the second plate; look at the ladder and the strands that compose it, and especially at its lowest rung in the first plate, and then at the mechanical rendering of it in the second; at the work, and especially at the outline and drawing of the advanced leg of the kneeling man, in the one, and at the same thing in the other. If a difference of quality fatal to the idea of the



two plates being by the same hand is not immediately perceived nothing that we can say will make the difference apparent. If it be perceived, it is worth while to carry the comparison further. Look again, therefore, at the embroidered cloth in the first plate, and two pins will be perceived in it by which the folds have been arranged as an artist would arrange them. Examine these folds, and the fine action of the point by which they have been expressed; and then, as before, examine the same would-be folds in the second plate; at the roundness expressive of substance of the one cloth, and the unsubstantial flatness of the other which the heaviest work has proved unable to redeem; at the woodwork, which is like wood on the ladder of the first, and at the gross idea of a ladder which the copyist has had in the second. From such an examination carried over the whole of the two plates, it is, we hold, impossible to avoid the conclusion that the first was done by a master, the last by a scholar; and that the scholar in this case was Lievens. Compare with the same heads of Rembrandt, for *difference*, and with the works of Lievens referred to at page 24 for *similarity with his work*.

ST. JEROME IN MEDITATION (W. 105).—This is a small plate with much of the character of the heads in the "Good Samaritan" and evidently by Bol. The lion is the heraldic leopard, and has its counterpart in an etching by Bol of St. Jerome in a cavern (D 3). A drawing of a lion by Rembrandt has been placed next to it by way of contrast.

"THE THREE ORIENTAL HEADS" (W. 288).—We need not waste much time over these. The original of one of them with the characteristic staring eyes, by Lievens, is here and we credit it with being the original head, and think it better than the supposed copy of it, "with retouches," by Rembrandt. As to the signature we are convinced from re-examination that Vosmaer's reading of it as a Dutch word signifying "retouched," is the correct one. That Lievens and, no one else, is mainly responsible for the authorship of all these plates we cannot, doubt.

"THE ECCE HOMO" (W. 82).—Here again we are assisted by evidence from without. First, we have the original picture obligingly placed at the disposal of the Club by Lady Eastlake; next, two finished proofs of the etching itself; next, a *fac simile* of an unfinished proof of the etching in course of reproduction by the copyist; and, lastly, several etchings large and small, done at the same time by Rembrandt, to compare with these—namely, "The Death of the Virgin," "The Presentation in the Vaulted Temple" and "Youth Surprised by Death." We have only to bring the whole of this evidence into juxtaposition—picture, proof, copy, and Rembrandt's undoubted work—to be assured that this popular, but coarse print, for which such large sums have been paid, and which the cataloguers one and all go out of their way to extol, is no more than an able copy largely touched upon by Rembrandt, and published by him solely for



commercial purposes. To make this clear, we have had a reduced *fac simile* made of a portion of the unfinished proof (Plate iii.). It is worth observing; the handling of it; the weak heads in the left corner; and the glaring fact that the copyist—proceeding from the sides of the plate towards its centre, in true mechanical fashion, finishing as he goes—has actually made the shadows projected by the legs of Pilate's chair, before making the legs themselves! The late respected keeper of the prints of the British Museum used to say of this unfinished proof, that "it was odd so great a man as Rembrandt should have worked in this strange way from the side toward the centre of his plate," but two things certainly never struck Mr. Carpenter; namely, that an original artist could not, and would not, have worked in this way, and that a copyist *would*\*—and that other examples are to be found in Rembrandt's works of spaces thus left by the copyist for him to fill up, as in the Goldweigher. But as if to make all this still plainer, there happens to be in the British Museum a second impression of this rare unfinished state, covered with Rembrandt's corrections of the scholar's work—great dabs of bistre here, to let him know where it was to be stronger; sweeping erasures there, to show where it was to be altogether removed—and, generally, such an emphatic treatment of the proof as we see in unfinished prints of the *Liber Studiorum* of Turner. Compare for *difference with Rembrandt's work at this time*,

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\* See M. Flameng's copy in course of execution of the Hundred Guilder plate.

the "Death of the Virgin," (W. 104). "The Presentation in the Vaulted Temple" (W. 54); and "Youth surprised by Death" (W. 113); and for *similarity with the work of Lievens*—whom we designate without hesitation as the author of the plate—the prints by him in the British Museum, to which we have referred at page 24.

"THE GOLD WEAHER" (W. 283).—Here, as we have said, is another instance of the copyist—in this case Bol—working from the sides towards the centre evidently in the preparation of an etching which Rembrandt was to finish by putting in the principal head. Of this plate we should say that it is from a picture, and that, like another plate next to it, "Rembrandt drawing from a model," it was *ébauché* by Rembrandt, and given to Bol to fill in, but with instructions to leave a vacant place for the head and shoulders. The head once put in, the most unpractised eye will see the difference between the masterly work of Rembrandt which composes it and the furred robe, and the rest of the plate—between it and the head of the kneeling boy for instance; while for *difference* between the money chest, barrels, and table cloth, observe the accessories in the "Death of the Virgin," and, for general dissimilarity of work, with "Youth surprised by Death."—both contemporary prints.

"REMBRANDT DRAWING FROM THE MODEL" (W. 189).—The free use of the dry-point line in the laying in of this plate gives it the look



of a later production, but we are persuaded, from the work in the background, that it is a plate of about this time, which, for some unknown reason, was abandoned while in the act of being filled in by Bol. On the first state, when out of the frame, will be seen, in fact, Rembrandt's instructions to his pupil to lower the tone of the two light patches which appear as "spots" in the background.

We have now come to the end of what we have called these "commercial plates," respecting which we may mention, as a proof of our consistency, that we would never admit them into our own collection. We can at no time, indeed, remember—even in our youngest and least experienced day—to have felt the least desire to possess any of them.

And now a word, in especial, as to the year 1633. In this year there were done in Rembrandt's studio more etchings alone than would have occupied a professed engraver a year. If Rembrandt did them how, we would ask, did he manage to do thirty-three known pictures, large and small, and a number of signed drawings besides? The two great plates of the "Descent from the Cross" would alone have occupied six months of the time, and the aggregate work of the year would have been at the rate of a picture or etching a week!

## MIDDLE PERIOD. 1640 TO 1650.

We enter upon the Middle Period with, as it were, a new sensation. Much had happened to Rembrandt by this time. He had made a great name, he had married, and his wife was dying; and we know that after her death things did not go well with him. We also remember that about this time less began to be heard of him. Is there anything about the work of this period to throw light on this obscure part of his career? We have said, as an apology for our new method of approaching the subject of Rembrandt, that the accidents and events of a man's life are the immediate incentives and regulators of his work. Inversely then, ought not the Work to tell us something about the Man? Where was Rembrandt at this time? What became of him after the death of Saskia in 1642, and the disorder of his affairs? Was he still in Amsterdam? If so, how is it we cease to hear of him, and that he is no longer painting and etching its citizens? Does the sudden appearance of Landscape in his work, and its singular preponderance in the etchings of this period—to which, indeed, it is almost wholly confined—tell us nothing on this score? What part of Holland furnished him with the motives of all these landscapes—"The Three Trees," the "Omval," the "Goldweigher's Field," the



“Hog,” the “Bull,” the “Orchard,” the “Cow Drinking,” the “Milk Pails,” the “Boat House,” the “Village near a High Road Arched.” Where are they? They negative the idea that he was still in Amsterdam, but they do not tell us what we want to know, which is where he was. Does our boasted chronological arrangement—do our dates—tell us nothing? Saskia died in 1642, and the two or three landscapes which precede that date are at, or in the immediate neighbourhood of, Amsterdam. But after that? Well, we believe we have the answer before us. Look at the group of etchings, brought as it were by accident close together, under the years 1645 to 1648. The “Portrait of Jan Six” (W. 287), “Six’s Bridge” (W. 205), “Medea” (W. 116), the frontispiece to Six’s tragedy; the “Spanish Gipsy” (W. 83), an illustration of another tragedy in which, doubtless, Six was also interested; the portrait of the Portuguese Physician, “Ephraim Bueno” (W. 280), the original picture of which Six had in his possession; “A Grotto,” so-called, but, as we think, a garden boat house (W. 107); “Rembrandt Drawing at a Window” (W. 22). Surely that window can be no other than a window in Six’s house, and that Rembrandt had found refuge and solace at this time with his sympathetic and powerful friend at Elsbroeck; and that these things, and all these landscapes—and possibly the “Hundred Guilder Print” itself, which we observe close at hand—were thought out and finished in his companionship, and under his sheltering roof. If so, what an episode in the intellectual life of Six—what a compensation for Rembrandt!

Passing the more important of the prints of this epoch in rapid review, and noticing, as we go, the singular addition of Italian backgrounds to more than one Dutch foreground among the landscapes, we have the famous "Mill" (W. 230)—not "Rembrandt's mill" though, as the Catalogues have it, but a mill etched from a large picture which we ourselves remember to have seen many years ago at the British Institution—a most beautiful and rare proof; the bright little etching of "Amsterdam" (W. 207), and the "Saskia Dying" (W. 353), of which rare print there are two proofs, one touchingly worked upon by the hand of Rembrandt himself; then the "Three Trees" (W. 209), grave and sombre as at such a time it would be; then the beautiful "Omval" (W. 206), the most perfect of landscapes, done just three years after the death of Saskia; then the "Elsbroeck Group" as we henceforth propose to call them, among which is the portrait of "Sylvius" (W. 282)—the remonstrant minister who suffered, and looks as if he had suffered, for his opinions—the cousin of Saskia, the ally of Rembrandt, and who, in fact, married them; not done from the life, for Sylvius had died in 1638, but from a picture painted from recollection of him in 1644; and what place so suggestive of such congenial recollections as the quiet of Elsbroeck? Then the "Faustus" (W. 272), the two "St. Jeromes," the larger one of which is after a drawing by Titian\* (W. 109); the "Landscape

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\* This drawing differing in nothing from the etching, except in the absence of the lion, and the presence of a recumbent figure of Venus in place of the Saint, was recently sold in London at Dr. Wellesley's sale.



with a Ruined Tower" in its rare 1st state (W. 220), the "Gold Weighers' Field" (W. 231), so called, but which we would rather believe to be the Chateau of Six; and, finally, the famous "Hundred Guilder" print (W. 78) in its two states. These speak so eloquently for themselves, and are represented by such exceptionally fine proofs, that we need do no more than recommend a careful study of them. Of the "Hundred Guilder" prints, however—of which there are no less than four magnificent impressions, two of them in the first state—a few special words are very necessary. No difference, it will be observed, as to *technique*, exists between these two states except a few oblique lines laid across the neck of the ass in the right hand corner of the plate—a few lines, however, which represent a difference of many hundreds of pounds in their market value. Now, of these two states, what we want to say, as practical etchers and printers, is this: that for the reasons given at page 17, the two impressions in the later states are more satisfactory than those in the earlier. We know, probably within one or two, how many impressions were taken of this rare first state, for Rembrandt has told us on the back of one of them. Well, of those few impressions (all of which we have seen,) we say advisedly that they have not, as yet, what we have previously called "begun to print"—that the ink has not yet fully entered into all their lines, and, consequently that the lighter and more luminous portions of them to the left of the plate are less good as to impression than in the proofs in the second state which immediately succeed them. The point being an important one as

bearing upon the conventional, as opposed to the real, value of states, we direct attention to it.

#### LATE PERIOD—1651 TO 1666.

The latest period opens with portraits of Rembrandt's friend and publisher Clement de Jonge, John Asselyn, and Coppenol, from which and from the fact that it presents us with only one dated landscape, "The Vista" (W. 219), we may conclude that, by this time, a return had been made to Amsterdam. Other Amsterdam portraits also, principally of friends like Lutma, Jan Antonides Van der Linden and Coppenol or of persons connected with the proceedings in bankruptcy then going on, like Abraham Franzen and the elder and younger Haaring, mark this period; besides the rare portraits of Rembrandt himself at an advanced age contributed by Monsieur Dutuit, and of Dr. Arnoldus Tholinx, usually confused with the advocate, and supposed alchemist, Van Tol. It is in this period, also, that we have the plate "Tobit and the Angel," by Hercules Seghers, so strangely adopted by Rembrandt, and altered by him into a "Descent into Egypt" (W. 61), and the "St. Francis," and that those sublime conceptions occur which fitly close the work of Rembrandt, "Christ Before Pilate," and the "Crucifixion."

The series of four impressions of "Clement de Jonge" (W. 274) should be first noticed, because of their broad treatment, and as



examples of those progressive conditions of an etched plate, which may properly be designated "states." Nor should "Tobit blind" be passed by (W. 46) on account of its pathos and the complete mastery over the material which it displays, or the touched and other rare proofs of "Jan Asseliyn with the Easel" (W. 279), with the date appended, 1651; or the fine "St. Francis," (W. 112) Italian in character, and with back-ground evidently inspired by Titian or Campagnola. But the portraits of the period—the conspicuous examples of the power of etching—are the "Lutma" (W. 278) the "Tholinx" (W. 286) first and second states, and the "Elder" (W. 276) and "Younger" (W. 277) Haaring. These alone would furnish material for a treatise. Since, however, the business of this essay is not with matters which speak for themselves, but with points which have been misunderstood, or which require elucidation, we pass on at once to the consideration of the two great plates to which we have referred and which appear to us to involve such a point—namely, the "Christ before Pilate" (W. 80), and the "Crucifixion" (W. 81).

In the present collection, notwithstanding a difference in their dates, these obviously companion prints—companion in feeling, treatment, size, and subject—have been brought into close juxtaposition, the "Presentation" first and the "Crucifixion" next to it, as if they were essentially one work, which, in its conception, composition, execution, and printing in all its various stages, had taken from first to last, not a

week, as the cataloguers appear to suppose, but a year or more to accomplish. Nor has this arrangement involved any anachronism, since it is clear that the dates on the two plates refer in neither case to the year of their production, but only to the year in which certain late states of them were printed, which of course leaves the question open as to which of the two was done first. The rudely expressed actors in the "Crucifixion," too, which had suggested an earlier performance, have been only thus "laid in," because they had to be ultimately rendered in an advanced chiaroscuro to suit the divine passage which they were destined to illustrate. \* \* \*

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land till the ninth hour. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;" \* \* \* The plate, in short, from the first, was intended to be one of those dark plates of which we have an example in the "Christ Entombed" (W. 91). It was, therefore, useless to do more than indicate figures which were to be ultimately half obscured. And this being so, we would ask, how is it that this rude preparation for a chiaroscuro plate—for it really amounts to nothing more—and which has impressed the observer so meanly as to cause him to take it for a younger work, yet so recommends itself to the collector that he will pay three times more for it than for the true and final expression of the perfected plate which does not occur till towards its third state?



And now, imperfect as we feel it to be, this article would be still less complete without a word upon the insufficiency of the catalogues and of those who undertake to make them. To make a *Catalogue Raisonné* of the work of Rembrandt, it is not enough to be able to detect and record small points of difference, and yet be without a comprehensive knowledge of the man, and of his art, or of Art in general, or of the art of Etching in particular. Experience; practice; an actual acquaintance with what is possible and what is impossible to be done upon a plate of copper, and with the details of the printing process too; the ready discernment which belongs to the artist nature; the skill of the synthesist no less than of the analyst, and many a rare gift besides, must be in possession of him who would undertake so delicate and responsible a task. Borrowed ideas hastily picked up and strung together, the division and sub-division of things which in their very nature are indivisible, can, without such special aptitudes, but lead to the multiplication of states and differences profitable only to the dealer—and to a confusion of the subject even greater than that which exists at present.

FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN.

*May 1, 1877.*

## POSTSCRIPTUM.

It would be neither fair nor courteous, considering the tone of disparagement of catalogues and cataloguers in which the above article has confessedly been written, not to give to Monsieur Charles Blanc (who is too distinguished to be included within the general scope of its reflections) an opportunity of stating his reasons for not adopting the method of classification which we have proposed, and of which our present exhibition is the first practical example.

" . . . . . Pour ranger les estampes d'un maître," says Monsieur Charles Blanc,\*  
 " il n'y a, ce nous semble, que deux méthodes: l'une consisterait à les classer selon leur  
 " date, de manière que l'on pût suivre les phases diverses du talent de l'artiste, ses  
 " commencements, ses progrès, son apogée, sa décadence, et une telle classification ne  
 " serait pas à coup sûr sans intérêt; l'autre méthode serait toute de raison; elle con-  
 " sisterait à rassembler les sujets homogènes et à les ranger philosophiquement par  
 " ordre d'importance, et pour ceux que tiennent à l'histoire, par ordre chronologique.  
 " C'est le parti que nous avons adopté, pour deux motifs: d'abord un grand nombre  
 " de pièces de Rembrandt ne portant pas de date, il serait impossible d'en supposer  
 " une à celles qui n'en ont point; en second lieu, cet ordre serait, dans l'œuvre de ce  
 " maître, beaucoup moins curieux que dans celui de tout autre, parce que son génie ne  
 " présente aucune inégalité, aucune intermittence, depuis le début jusqu'à la fin de sa  
 " carrière de graveur, si bien que parmi tant de pièces, on n'en citerait guère qui se  
 " ressentent de l'inexpérience de la jeunesse ou de la faiblesse de l'âge avancé.  
 " D'ailleurs l'œuvre de Rembrandt est si varié, qu'un classement suivant la date des  
 " eaux-fortes, présenterait une confusion désagréable et souvent choquante. Telle  
 " fantaisie un peu trop libre semblerait monstrueusement déplacée à côté d'un sujet  
 " tiré de l'Évangile. Il a donc fallu renoncer absolument à ce genre de classification."

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\* Charles Blanc, *L'œuvre Complet de Rembrandt*, Paris, 1859, pp. 7, 8.



## PROPOSED CHANGE OF TITLE, AND FORM OF CATALOGUE.

Year of production.		Dated Prints of the Middle Period from the Death of Saskia to the Return to Amsterdam, including the Etchings of the Elsbroeck Group.	No. in Wilson.	No. in Ch. Blanc.
1642	1	The Dying Saskia - - - -	353	202
	2	A Cottage with White Pales - -	229	332
1643	3	The Three Trees - - - -	209	315
	4	The Hog - - - -	154	350
1644	5	The Shepherd - - - -	217	321
1645	6	Abraham addressing Isaac - -	38	5
	7	The Omval - - - -	206	312
	8	Repose in Egypt - - - -	63	31
	9	Six's Bridge - - - -	205	311
	10	The Boat House - - - -	228	331
1646	11	Sylvius - - - -	282	187
1647	12	The Burgomaster Six - - - -	287	184
	13	Ephraim Bonus - - - -	280	172
1648	14	Medea - - - -	116	82
	15	The Gypsy - - - -	124	83
	16	Beggars at a Door - - - -	173	146
	17	St. Jerome Writing - - - -	108	74
	18	Rembrandt Drawing - - - -	22	235
	19	The Synagogue - - - -	130	98
1650	20	Christ Healing the Sick (1650?) -	78	49
	21	A Canal with Swans - - - -	232	335
	22	The Canal Boat - - - -	233	336
	23	The Flock of Sheep - - - -	221	325
	24	The Milkman - - - -	210	316
	25	The Village with a Square Tower -	215	319
	26	The three Cottages - - - -	214	318
1651	27	Six's Chateau (?) - - - -	231	334

It will be seen by a reference to existing catalogues that considerable liberties have been taken with the titles of most of the above etchings—No. 1, "A Woman with a large hood" being called "*The Dying Saskia*," No. 7, "Omval," (which is not a village, but a bend in the river Amstel, near Amsterdam,) "*The Omval*," No. 10, "A Grotto with a Brook," "*The Boat House*," &c.; and (subject to further examination) No. 27, "The Goldweiger's Field," "*Six's Chateau*"—the probability being that most, if not all, of the prints from 9 to 27 were done at Elsbroeck or in the neighbourhood. At Jan Six's sale too in 1702 (Vosm. 385) were "some engraved plates by Rembrandt."

F. S. H.





A SIMILAR OF A PORTION OF THE SPINNED PLATE OF THE

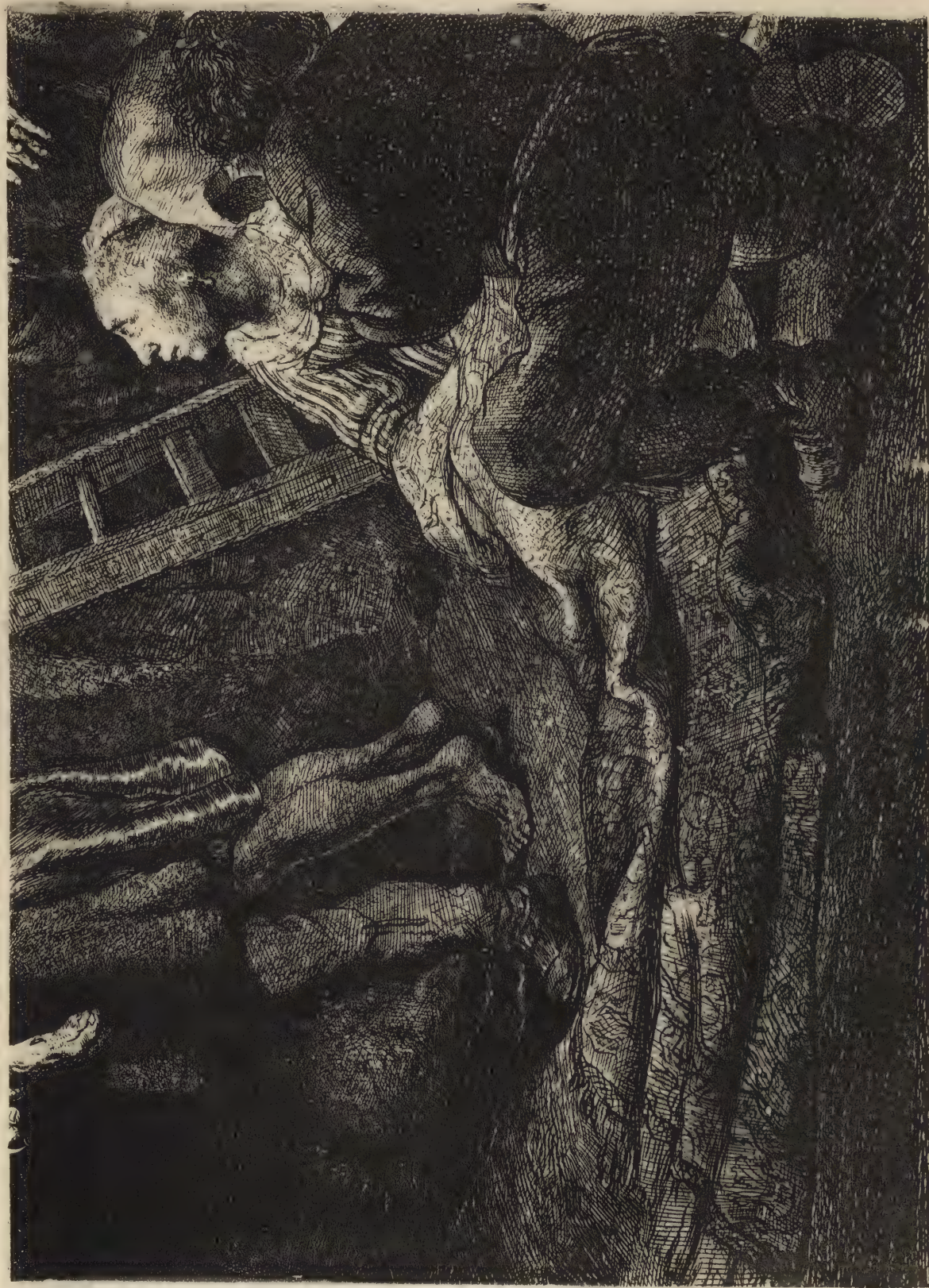
GREAT DESCENT FROM THE CROSS BY REMBRANDT? (BRIT. MUS. APRIL 6. 1877.)

PLATE.









PHOTOGRAPHED BY J. LEITCH & CO. LONDON.

PLATE 2.

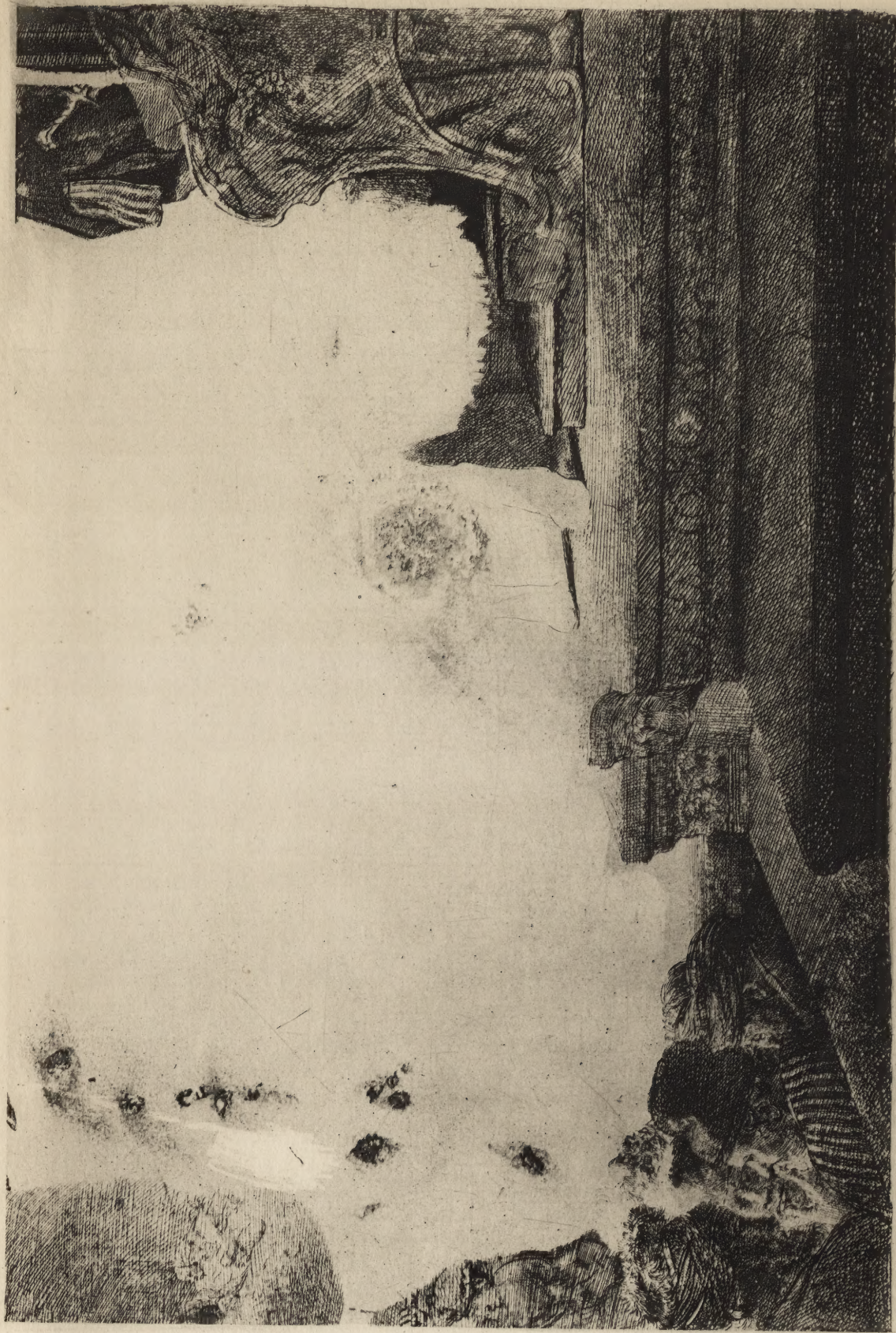
FAC SIMILE OF A PORTION OF THE SECOND PLATE OF THE

GREAT DESCENT FROM THE CROSS BY LIEVENS? (BRIT. MUS. APRIL 6 1877.)









PHOTOGRAPH BY J. LEITCH & CO. LONDON.

PLATE 3.

REDUCED FAC SIMILE OF PART OF AN UNFINISHED PROOF OF THE GREAT  
ECCE HOMO OF REMBRANDT, IN COURSE OF BEING COPIED BY LIEVENSS (BRIT. MUS. APRIL 6 1877.)



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